A

SECOND LETTER

TO A

DEIST,

Concerning a late Book entitled,

Christianity as Old as the Creation:

More Particularly that Chapter which relates to Dr. *CLARKE.*

By the Author of the Former.

Errant ergo velut in mari magno, nec quo ferantur intelligunt; quia nec viam cernunt, nec ducem sequuntur.

Lactantius.

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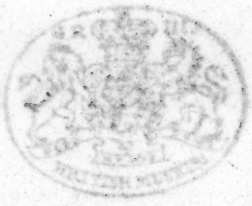

A SECOND LETTER *to a* DEIST, *&c.*

SIR,

IF, inſtead of anſwering the Queſtions you are pleaſed to ask me, I ſhould refer you to abler Hands, and deſire to be excuſed; there might perhaps be more Diſcretion, and Modeſty, in ſuch a Proceeding; but certainly leſs Reſpect. On this Account I chuſe to ſend you an Anſwer, however ſhort and imperfect, rather than an Apology, ſince you have given yourſelf the Trouble to call for *my* Sentiments; *mine* you ſhall have. If they turn to no other Account; they will, at leaſt, convince you of my Inclination and Readineſs to gratify you.——I ought indeed, not only in point of Good-Manners, but from a higher Principle, to *be always ready to give an Anſwer to every Man that asketh me a Reaſon of the Hope that is in* me. And if every Man has ſuch a Claim; you have a double one. Though I think it a Happineſs to differ from you in

Matters of Religion; it is my Deſire, and my Ambition, to agree with you as much as poſſible in other Reſpects. As you profeſs the Obligations of Humanity; ſo it is your Praiſe to excel in the Diſcharge of them. As I profeſs a higher Rule; it will be my Fault, and my Shame, if I be not equally obſervant of it.——But I muſt beſpeak your Excuſe; if, in anſwering your Author's Queries, I communicate my Thoughts plainly and freely. To disbelieve what the reſt of Mankind hold ſacred, is one thing; to revile, or ridicule it, is another. *Licentiouſneſs* can have no Plea; *Liberty* never want a good one. While he practiſes the former, he may well allow of the latter.——But to begin my Task; your firſt Queſtion is a general one.

1. *What do I think of a late Book entitled,* CHRISTIANITY AS OLD AS THE CREATION?——Before I paſs any Judgment of the *Book*; give me leave to propoſe an Emendation in the *Title*. It ſhould have been, if I miſtake not, *Chriſtianity older than the Creation:* or rather, *Chriſtianity before all Ages*. The *moral* Part of it, which is our Author's Subject, being a Syſtem of Eternal Truths; could neither commence at the Creation, nor at any other Time. It muſt have been *as old as* the Divine Underſtanding; that is, have co-exiſted with it from Everlaſting. I do not pretend, in ſaying this, to be ignorant of the Author's Meaning. But it may

may deſerve to be conſidered, whether ſuch an Impropriety ſhould be ſuffered in the Title of ſo pompous a Book.——However, I ask pardon for this ſhort Digreſſion, and proceed to your Query.

As to the *Book* itſelf, I think it needleſs to take notice of the old Leaven which appears working in it. It is Folly to expect, that *Antichriſtian* Authors ſhould not be *Anticlerical:* unleſs, Sir, *you* would think fit to write; and ſet as good an Example by your Pen, as you have often done by Word of Mouth. I never knew you fix a Cenſure on the whole Order. If you blame ſome; you never fail to give others their due. And indeed ſo does your Author, occaſionally. But in you it is Honeſty; in him it is Art. To ſhew us that this is only a Copy of his Countenance; his Invectives are generally ſo contrived, as to comprehend the whole Profeſſion, and take in every Man. But this is a gentle Perſecution; or rather none at all: Such Accuſations as theſe always carrying their own Confutation along with them. Setting aſide therefore this Part of the Book, as foreign to both your Purpoſe and mine; I proceed to the argumentative.

This then appears to me, after the moſt careful and unprejudiçed Peruſal; to have far more Colour than Strength; far more Shew than Subſtance. It ſeems indeed fair and clear toward the Surface; but whoever looks deeper

deeper into it, will find Mire and Mud riſing in great abundance. The Arguments are often ſpecious, and ſometimes ſubtle; but ſeldom ſound. They either conclude nothing; or nothing but what is univerſally allowed. When he meets with Points which make againſt him; he walks over them ſilently, or ſtrikes off another way. Such as make for him, or ſeem to do ſo; he fetches at any diſtance. When Materials for Reaſoning are wanting; the Reader is frequently put off with empty Declamations, or artful Harangues. Nor can I avoid charging the Author with great Confuſion of Ideas, and an unaccountable Miſrepreſentation both of Men and Things.— To make good the ſeveral Parts of this Charge by an Induction of Particulars, would carry me beyond the Bounds of your Patience, as well as of my Leiſure. But various Inſtances will be produced in the Courſe of this Letter: and, in the mean time, Sir, take this Specimen.

THE two following Propoſitions may be looked upon as the main Pillars of his Scheme; the one, that *the Law of Nature is perfect and unchangeable*; and the other, that *all Men are naturally capable of diſcovering it.* The former is true, if rightly explained; the latter wants Diſtinctions and Limitations.— But for the preſent, let them both paſs undiſputed. What is it that he infers from them? If I underſtand him, it is; that *the Goſpel*

Goſpel is needleſs, and all Revelation ſuperfluous. The better to make appear the Wideneſs of this Concluſion, and the Weakneſs of the Argument; let us place it in different Lights, and try it in parallel Caſes.

LET it then be affirmed, or if you will, ſuppoſed; firſt, that *Temperance and Exerciſe conſtitute a compleat Rule of Health.* Secondly, that *this Rule is evident to Mankind from Obſervation and Experience.* What follows? According to your Author's Argument, that *Phyſic and Phyſicians are altogether uſeleſs.* Can we imagine a more ridiculous Concluſion? And yet how, or wherein does it differ from his own?—Not to mention any hereditary Diſadvantages; as Man is a Free-Agent, it is always in his power to impair the Health, and vitiate the Conſtitution, either of his Mind or his Body: and in both Caſes Remedies are wanting, notwithſtanding the Perfection of the forementioned Rules. Why then will not your Author allow Phyſicians for Mens Souls, as well as for their Bodies?——According to our Saviour's own Declaration, He *came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance:* not to tend the *Whole*, but to adminiſter to the *Sick*; who not only ſtand in need of Medicines, but require a very different Regimen from the other.——But has not this Author made Proviſion for the Diſtempers of Mens Minds? Has he not laid down *Repentance* as an abſolute

and

and efficacious Remedy in all Caſes? Does he not hold that this Remedy was in every Man's Reach; and by Conſequence, that he needed no Phyſician but himſelf? So indeed he ſeems to ſay; and it muſt be his Meaning. But inſtead of proving theſe material Points, he has only begged them.——On the contrary, I maintain, and hope to find an Opportunity of making it good, that however this may be looked upon as a natural Remedy; yet the greateſt Part of it is entirely ſupernatural: that alone, and of itſelf, it could not heal Men; though a neceſſary Preparative for their being healed. At preſent, I ſhall only take notice, that though the Light of Nature might give Men juſt Hopes that Repentance would produce ſome good Effect; yet what that Effect would be, no Mortal was able to diſcover: and this I think proveable even from your Author's own Principles.— If then, as I am now only ſuppoſing, this Remedy was doubtful, and defective, before Revelation; and Men could not tell what to expect from it; the Conſequence is manifeſt. For how few are willing to take bitter Medicines, or undergo ſevere Operations; in expectation of a Cure, both imperfect, and very uncertain? And yet it is notorious, that the Generality of Mankind will do and ſuffer far more for the Health of their Bodies, than for that of their Minds. In the latter Caſe, if the Encouragements be not very ſtrong,

and the Proſpect very fair; the Patient is intractable and obſtinate, and will yield to nothing.

BUT let us view the Author's Argument in a different Poſition. Let us ſuppoſe Men to enjoy naturally all the Light that he allows them for the Direction of their Conduct: Might they not nevertheleſs go aſtray, and want to be reduced?——In clear Day-light, and open Sun-ſhine, may not a Traveller take a wrong Road; and wander on till he bewilder himſelf? Perhaps ſome amuſing Object catches his Eye, and tempts him aſide. Perhaps it detains him there; and ſo far engages his Mind, as to make him forget both his Road and his Journey. Is all Advice, all Aſſiſtance, in ſuch a Caſe needleſs? Is it not, on the contrary, very deſirable; that ſome Friend, wiſer than himſelf, ſhould providentially interpoſe to awaken and admoniſh him; or leading him gently by the Hand, bring him back into the Way from whence he erred? Should he moreover, to prevent the like Excurſions for the future, aſſure him, that the Affair he is going about is of infinitely greater Conſequence than he imagined; and that his Welfare entirely depends on his Diligence and Expedition: Should he preſs him with the greateſt Earneſtneſs to purſue his Journey vigorouſly, and without Deviation or Trifling; and to encourage him the more effectually, ſhould he promiſe him his

Company and Aſſiſtance to the far-end; and undertake, if he were not wanting to himſelf, to carry him through all Difficulties that he might happen to meet with: would ſuch Offices as theſe be uſeleſs; or ſuch Offers contemptible?—If this Traveller ſhould refuſe the Aid of ſuch a Friend, and reject his kind Propoſals; if he ſhould tell him, that he had Light enough upon his Hands, and that he knew his Road and his Buſineſs; and therefore was determined not to go back with him; but to take his own Time, and his own Meaſures: if he ſhould farther declare, that he thought him too officious; and that he had no occaſion either for his Help, or his Counſel: would not any one who knew the Caſe, conclude the Man doubly loſt; and that he was out of his Wits, as well as out of his Way?

WHATEVER may be ſaid to the latter Part of this Caſe; the former is certainly applicable to all Mankind. They had all wandered from the Path of their Duty, and ſtruck out in Purſuit of their own Inventions. What was then to be done? To bring them back by meer Compulſion was neither conſiſtent with the Nature of Man, nor the Nature of Virtue: and to ſuffer them to periſh without Relief, or further Tryal, was equally repugnant to the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs. According to your Author, there was no occaſion for the Interpoſition of Heaven. Man's Way was plain before him: if he would not perſiſt, when

when he was in it; nor return, when he was out of it; let him look to the Conſequence.—But what Abſurdity in ſuppoſing, that God ſhould be pleaſed to try ſome further Expedient for the Recovery of Mankind? That He ſhould ſet before them ſtronger, and more certain Motives, than they ever knew, or could know, before? That He ſhould ſtrengthen their Obligations by new and unexpected Mercies? That He ſhould favour them with a perfect Example, as well as a perfect Rule? That He ſhould vouchſafe them ſuch Aids and Influences; as might, conſiſtently with Liberty and Virtue, facilitate their Converſion? If any Man can ſhew that ſuch Means as theſe were either improper, or ſuperfluous; let him produce his Proofs.—It cannot, I think, be denyed, but that whatever Methods appear moſt conducive to the Promotion of Virtue and Happineſs; are, on that very Account, moſt likely to be choſen by the Supreme Being. And whoever conſiders the Chriſtian Revelation attentively, and without Prejudice; will ſoon diſcover its Connexion with thoſe great Ends.—That Men wanted a Deliverance from the *Guilt*, as well as the *Dominion* of Sin; ſeems to me moſt evident: but it is a Point that I meddle not with at this time. Neither have I yet inſiſted on the Defects of natural Reaſon; though it would greatly have ſtrengthened ſome of the foregoing Obſerva-

tions. But as this, Sir, is the Subject of your *ſecond Query*, which I had no mind to anticipate; it was therefore omitted. —— Here then you ask,

2. *Whether I can make any Doubt of* THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE LIGHT OF NATURE? Which, it ſeems, appears to you ſo manifeſt a Truth; that whoever diſputes it, muſt be, you think, *either very injudicious, or very partial.* — So general, and ſo ambiguous a Queſtion, is not to be anſwered in the Lump; but muſt be carefully unfolded, and taken to pieces. The firſt Thing to be inquired, is, what is meant by *the Light of Nature.* The *Light of Nature*, and the *Law of Nature*, are uſed promiſcuouſly by your Author; nor can I find him ever making any Diſtinction between them. If then by the *Light of Nature*, you mean the *Law of Nature*, conſidered objectively, and in itſelf; I not only allow its *Sufficiency*, but its full *Perfection.* That Law which reſults from the Eternal Reaſons and Relations of Things, muſt needs be a compleat Rule of Action for all *intelligent Creatures*; and I beg leave to add, even for the *Creator* Himſelf; who, I humbly ſuppoſe, neither is, nor can be, directed by any other. It ſeems utterly impoſſible to diſcover, or conceive, any other Foundation for the moral Perfection of the Deity, and the Rectitude of His Actions; than that of

a Conformity to this ſacred Law *. By Him it is clearly perceived in all its Branches, and in its utmoſt Comprehenſion: as by Him it is eternally and univerſally fulfilled.—This then is the great Light which enlightens all moral Agents, and directs the whole intellectual Syſtem: but in Meaſures and Degrees infinitely various. This is that all-ſufficient Rule which ſprings from the eſſential Agreement, Order, Proportion and Truth of Things; and which conſtitutes all Beauty, Goodneſs, Virtue and Perfection. This is that ſacred and ſupreme Law, which the Divine Author of Chriſtianity came to repromulge and make manifeſt to the Children of Men; as far as they were concerned in it. And I muſt take the Liberty to affirm, that we hereby not only ſee further into it; but much more plainly, clearly, and diſtinctly.—As ſome of the Lights of Heaven twinkle at an immenſe diſtance before our naked Eyes, but are magnified and brought near by a Teleſcope; ſuch, in

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* A Law generally taken, is a directive Rule unto Goodneſs of Operation.——A Law is properly that which Reaſon in ſuch ſort defineth to be good, that it muſt be done.——The learned Heathens have not otherwiſe ſpoken of the Firſt Cauſe, than as an Agent which knowing *what* and *why* it worketh; obſerveth in working a moſt exact *Order*, or *Law*.——God therefore is a Law both to Himſelf, and to all other Things.——That Law which hath been of God, and with God, everlaſtingly: that Law, the Author and Obſerver whereof is one only God, to be bleſſed for ever.——The general End of God's eternal working, is the Exerciſe of his moſt glorious and moſt abundant Virtue.—*Hooker's Eccleſiaſt. Polity, Book* 1.

in a great meaſure, is the Appearance of Moral and Divine Truths to our unaſſiſted Faculties, and to our Underſtandings enlightened by Revelation.

BUT to proceed; properly ſpeaking, the *Light of Nature* ſignifies that Share, that Portion of Moral Truth, which Men are naturally capable of diſcovering. Though the Sun be always the ſame in itſelf; yet the Light of it is variouſly enjoyed by Mankind; according to the Difference of their Sight, or Situation. And thus it is with Truth; which Men profeſs in a larger or leſs degree, according to their Abilities, Opportunities, Application, Conduct. In both Caſes, that only can be ſaid to be any Man's natural Light; which he enjoys, or is capable of enjoying, by the Uſe of his natural Faculties.

HERE then a Queſtion ariſes, which I muſt by no means leave behind me. Your Author ſeems to lay great Streſs on it: but why, or upon what Account, I am not able to determine. I ſhall put it as fairly and ſtrongly as I can.——Has not God enabled all Mankind, even Thoſe who never heard of Revelation, to obtain as much Light and Knowledge, as may be ſufficient to direct them in the Diſcharge of their Duty?——How I underſtand this Queſtion will appear immediately. In the mean time; without Scruple, or Heſitation, I anſwer in the Affirmative. Moſt certainly, in one Senſe, this is the Caſe of every Man living.

living. And the Reaſon is plain. It cannot poſſibly be any Man's *Duty* to *do*, what is not in his Power to *know*. Whoever improves his Knowledge as much as he can, and practiſes accordingly; is ſure to diſcharge his Duty. In this ſenſe, and in this reſpect, no Man wants *Light*.

BUT what is this to the Purpoſe? How does it follow from hence, that the Lights of Revelation are uſeleſs, even in reſpect of Man's Duty? I ſpeak not here of its Means, or its Motives; nor of the beneficial Influence of its Doctrines; but meerly of its practical Precepts. Notwithſtanding the foregoing Conceſſions, it is very evident, that a certain *Syſtem of Truth*, a certain *Standard of Knowledge*, is requiſite *for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*; that Men *may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good Works*. Though no Man can be obliged to practiſe more than his Circumſtances will permit him to know; which to him is, and muſt be, the Meaſure of his Duty: yet doubtleſs there is a *compleat Rule of Life*, an *adequate Scheme of Morality*; which, in general, is properly called *Human Duty*. And this I ſuppoſe to comprehend all the ſeveral Relations in which Men ſtand toward their Creator, their Fellow-Creatures, and themſelves.—The Conduct of the moſt uncivilized *Indian*, the moſt ignorant *Barbarian*, may be approved, and the Man accepted: Is he therefore (not to mention Chriſtians) in as good

good a Condition as *Antoninus* or *Socrates?* As reaſonably may we ſuppoſe theſe upon a Level with *Angels.* The better Men underſtand their Duty, the more virtuous they may be; the more virtuous they are, the further they advance toward Perfection; the nearer they are to perfection, the larger is their Sphere and Proſpect of Happineſs.——Suppoſing then, for the preſent, that Revelation had no other Uſe, no other Effect, than promoting the Knowledge of Morality, and affording Mankind a perfect Scheme of Human Duty; the Benefit of it would undeniably be very great. Tho' therefore the *Light of Nature* be *ſufficient* in one reſpect; it may be very *inſufficient* in another.

We may now go on to conſider, whether, according to the Idea of Human Duty here laid down, Man be capable of fully diſcovering it by the meer Force of natural Reaſon. *Muſt we not be obliged to own,* ſays * your Author, *that Reaſon is as certain a Guide for Rational Creatures, as Inſtinct is for Irrational?* In one Senſe, this will be readily granted; and in another, as readily denied. Tho' *perfect Inſtinct* is a certain Guide for *Irrational* Creatures; yet is *imperfect Reaſon* a certain Guide for *Rational* ones? If the Queſtion be otherwiſe put; the Caſe is miſrepreſented. *Right Reaſon* is doubtleſs a ſure Guide

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Guide for all intelligent Beings whatever. But conſidering *Reaſon* as a *Faculty* in Man; the Queſtion is, how far it reaches, and what Light it affords?

As Man came out of the Hands of his Maker, it is highly probable that he poſſeſſed thoſe intellectual Abilities, that Share of Reaſon, which this Author ſeems to claim for the whole Species. What our firſt Parents *actually knew*, I preſume not to determine: nor is it material. What I ſuppoſe, and contend for, is, that they wanted not *Capacity* to diſcover every Relation, every Moral Truth, that concerned human Nature. But if he, and you, Sir, will allow me to add, that this Nature was corrupted; firſt by Them, and afterwards by their Deſcendants: then the Queſtion will be, how far human Reaſon has either way ſuffered; and what Damage or Diminution it has ſuſtained.

I have nothing to ſay to the abſurd Doctrine of *Hereditary Guilt*: but nevertheleſs I maintain, that whatever wounds, or weakens the *Root*; muſt naturally hurt the *Branches*.—I look upon it as a plain obvious Truth; that whatever ſtrengthens and exalts the Paſſions; does, in proportion, darken and depreſs the Underſtanding. As this is probable from the very Nature of Things; ſo Experience fully confirms it. Whenever Paſſion prevails over Reaſon, and governs inſtead of it; it produces *Natural* Diſorder, as well as

Moral. It not only throws a Cloud over the Mind for the time preſent; but leaves a dark Shade behind it. Every vicious Action both debilitates the Agent, and ſtupifies the Underſtanding, in proportion to the Nature and Degree of it. To *commit Sin,* is to enter into *Servitude.* Every After-Commiſſion encreaſes the Bondage; and is an actual Diminution both of Light and Liberty. I ſpeak not of *natural Liberty.* The Man is as much an Agent after, as before. But his Appetites and Paſſions acquiring hereby freſh Weight, Strength, and Influence; being the Agent under ſuch Difficulties; as are, in effect, equivalent to a Decay of natural Liberty.

If then the Sin of our Firſt Parents had this Effect upon *them*; what hinders us from concluding that it might alſo redound to the Diſadvantage of their Offspring? It is not, I think, to be doubted, but the Principles of our Nature were originally ballanced with great Exactneſs. But if that Balance was deſtroyed, or weakened, in our firſt Parents; it is natural to ſuppoſe that the Miſchief would be tranſmitted. If their Paſſions were, by the Fall, raiſed and ſtrengthened beyond their original Pitch; a correſpondent Effect might be produced, at leaſt in their immediate Deſcendants; and by conſequence in the whole ſinful Race.—Let it be allowed, and maintained, that all Mens *Minds* are created pure and uncorrupt: they muſt, and will, very much depend

depend on the State of thoſe *Bodies* to which they are joined. Thoſe Bodies may have inherited ſuch Indiſpoſitions; as, by the Laws of Union, will naturally affect the Mind: Such as may communicate an undue Strength, a diſproportioned Eagerneſs, to its Appetites and Paſſions; and by conſequence, both darken the Underſtanding, and render the Choice of Virtue more difficult. In ſhort, irregular Paſſions produce certain Effects, and Alterations, both in the Mind, and in the Body. Thoſe which are produced in the Mind, terminate there, and cannot deſcend: thoſe which are produced in the Body, may be propagated to Poſterity; like any other corporeal Affection.——As there is nothing in this Account repugnant to Reaſon; ſo it is agreeable to plain Fact, and familiar Obſervation. How commonly do we hear it remarked, what a ſtrong Tincture Men often take from the Inclinations and Paſſions of their immediate Parents? And that even in Caſes, where there has been no Poſſibility of deriving it from Education. If then this be allowed in reſpect of *immediate* Parents; nothing will oblige us to ſtop till we come to the *Firſt*. Whatever Principle accounts for ſuch particular Derivations; will alſo account for the general Doctrine which I have been conſidering.—That remarkable Strength and Prevalence of Paſſion, which has been ſo often obſerved, and is indeed ſo obſervable every

where; in all Countries, in all Ages, in every Stage of Life, not excepting even Infancy; ſeems greatly to confirm this derivative Corruption: as likewiſe to point out, wherein that Corruption more particularly conſiſts.

And when to this is added an irregular and diſſolute Education; perverting the Mind with ill Principles, and immoral Examples; and ſowing thoſe Seeds of Vice and Profaneneſs, which have ſhot up into ſuch rank Impiety, and produced all over the World ſuch a foul and formidable Harveſt; can we wonder at the Decay of the Light of Nature, or the general Encreaſe of Ignorance? Is it not natural to expect, amidſt ſuch Diſorders, and ſuch a Diſſolution of Manners; that Mens Faculties ſhould grow dull, and their Perceptions dim? That Knowledge ſhould be obſtructed, and Truth obſcured? In a word, that a thick Miſt ſhould univerſally prevail, and cover the Minds of Men? Ignorance and Vice mutually produce, and promote, each other. Unruly Luſts and Paſſions do as naturally darken the Underſtanding; as Clouds and Vapours blacken the Air, and blot the Face of Day.—And indeed it muſt be confeſſed, whatever Diſadvantages Men may be ſuppoſed to *inherit*; that their Underſtandings are much more damaged by their own proper Vices, and *perſonal* Corruptions; than by any thing they are capable of deriving either

either from their neareſt, or remoteſt Parents. Whatever effect Sin produces on the Appetites and Paſſions; it muſt naturally be ſtrongeſt at firſt Hand: unleſs other Cauſes intervene to hinder it.—What makes the Matter ſtill worſe, is, that Vice and Immorality are not only Enemies to Light and Truth; but recommend Ignorance, and render Men *Lovers of Darkneſs*. Hereby it becomes not only tolerable, but eligible; as it hides them from themſelves, and hinders them from perceiving the Wretchedneſs of their Condition.

BUT though *the Light of Nature* was thus doubly impaired; I readily grant that it was by no Means extinguiſhed. The chief Lines of Duty, the *Magna Moralia*, ever remained viſible to all Men; unleſs when they wilfully ſhut their Eyes. It was not in the Power of the moſt corrupt Part of Mankind, to bring themſelves to an utter Inſenſibility of all moral Obligations. No Depravation could have ſuch an Effect as this; nor any thing leſs than a total Loſs of Underſtanding.—The moſt ignorant and uninſtructed Heathen muſt have had ſome Ideas of Juſtice, Probity, Gratitude, Mercy, and the like. And I grant you, Sir, that even this little *Light of Nature* was, in ſome Senſe, *ſufficient* for him. If we ſuppoſe him to have improved it as far as he was able, and to have practiſed accordingly; he could not fail of being approved in the ſight of God.

But

But in another Senſe, it was manifeſtly *inſufficient:* I mean, for bringing Mankind to that *Standard of Duty*, which belongs to their Nature; and that *State of Perfection* whereof they are capable. If it could be ſhewn that *the Light of Nature*, either at its loweſt Ebb, or higheſt Flow, was capable of carrying Men this Length; though I could not even then allow Revelation to be needleſs: yet I ſhould acknowledge it leſs needful, leſs expedient, than I can do at preſent.

SHOULD it be ſuppoſed that a few Philoſophers have been able to diſcover every moral Truth, meerly by the Force of natural Reaſon; yet what is this to the Bulk of Mankind? Few of whom would hear them, fewer underſtand them, and ſtill fewer regard them. And indeed for the moſt part they did not regard themſelves; but taught one way, and lived another. Whatever therefore they knew, they were not likely to have much Succeſs; or to promote, in any conſiderable Degree, the Intereſts of Truth and Virtue.——But I further deny that any of them were compleatly qualified, even in reſpect of Knowledge. As far as I can perceive, not one of them came up to the fore-mentioned *Standard.* Not one of them was Maſter of an *adequate, perfect, Rule of Life.* Not one of them has given us Grounds to conclude, that he had a clear Perception of that entire *Syſtem of Relations*, or *Moral Truths*, which conſtitute human

human Duty. Not *Ariſtotle*, not *Plato*, not *Socrates* himſelf.——Were *Cicero* now living, and was to draw up (as he would be very likely to do) a Scheme of human Duty out of the New Teſtament; putting it in his own Method, and dreſſing it in his own way: how would ſuch a Work appear, in compariſon with his *Offices?* As much ſuperior, I doubt not, in every unprejudiced Eye; as his *Offices* are to School-boys Themes, or the Prattle of Children.

WHAT inconſiderable Notice has been taken, either by him, or by any of the antient Philoſophers; of that Part of Morality, which may not improperly be called its *Sublime?* I know not whether this Word ſufficiently expreſſes the Idea that is meant by it; but give me Leave, Sir, to obſerve, that there is either a real *Sublime* in *Chriſtian Morality*, or ſomething ſtill greater. Whatever it be, or be called; you may find it every where adorning our ſacred Pages, and ſhining through the Goſpel in its full Majeſty, and Luſtre. Though it was ſcarce mentioned, or thought of before; yet how immediately did it recommend itſelf to the Underſtandings of Mankind? It was not only approved, but exceedingly admired; and by thoſe the moſt, who underſtood it beſt, and had the deepeſt Inſight into human Nature.

THEY who are not ſenſible of the Preeminence, and Perfection, of the Chriſtian Morality;

Morality; muſt either have conſidered it very ſlightly, or very partially; or otherwiſe be very incompetent Judges of it. If your Author be ſincere in ſome of his Animadverſions, he gives his Readers juſt Cauſe to ſuſpect, that he is not more deficient in *Faith*, than he is in *Taſte*. Whatever may be determined concerning the *Style* of the Evangelical Writers, which is a Point of no great Moment; every Attempt that is made to depreciate the Goſpel *Morals*, muſt recoil in an inſtant; and fall directly either upon the Underſtanding, or the Integrity of the Undertaker. We read of a certain *Spaniſh* Prince, who objected to the Syſtem of the Heavenly Bodies, and pretended himſelf able to correct it. If your Author pretend to correct, or cavil at, another Heavenly Syſtem; perhaps it may be on the ſame Ground: but certainly it will be with equal Succeſs. I am very confident the two Syſtems will be corrected both at the ſame time.

I might go on to obſerve, how *inſufficient* the meer *Light of Nature* was to give Mankind ſuch worthy Notions of the *Deity*, as are made known by Revelation. It is not indeed likely, that they, who could not arrive at an adequate Idea of human Perfection; ſhould be able to frame juſt Apprehenſions of the Divine. But allowing their Diſcoveries on this Subject to be conſiderable; ſtill thoſe Diſcoveries, whatever they might be, were,

were, in a great measure, locked up among a few Philosophers. The Generality of Mankind knew little or nothing of them. I mention not those vile Opinions, and impious Conceptions, which prevailed among the Heathens far and wide. They might, and therefore ought to have known better: though even in this respect the Benefit of Revelation was very great. But let the wisest of them be examined; and it will appear, that what they taught concerning the Deity, did not come up to those Ideas which are familiar to almost all Christians.——As to the *Certainty of a Future State*, and the *Immortality of the Soul*; I shall need to say little. It has been often shewn, how darkly and dubiously the Heathens judged concerning these weighty Points. That the Hopes of the most knowing, and most considerate; were but faint, obscure, and wavering.

We are now apt to think that the forementioned Doctrines are even demonstrable by Reason. And perhaps so they are. But by what Reason? I answer, by that Reason which is exercised, improved, and enlightened by Revelation. The more I consider, the more I am convinced; that many Arguments, many Truths both Moral and Religious, which appear to us the Products of our Understandings, and the Fruits of Ratiocination; are, in reality, nothing more than Emanations from Scripture; Rays of the Gospel imperceptibly

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tranſmitted; and, as it were, conveyed to our Minds in a Side-Light. That many of our Deductions, and Diſcoveries, which we are apt to look upon as the Oracles of our Reaſon; would be found, if they were fairly traced, entirely owing to certain Hints borrowed from Revelation.—Had any Man, two thouſand Years ago, *delineated the Religion of Nature*, or *demonſtrated the Attributes of God*, in ſuch a manner as we have lately ſeen both done; we might then have juſtly entertained a high Opinion of the Light of Nature, and the Strength and Compaſs of human Underſtanding. No Man can ſay, that the Learned of thoſe Times wanted Genius. Many of them were famous for great Penetration, Comprehenſion, and Cloſe-thinking. But they had the misfortune to live a few Ages too ſoon. Accordingly we find, after the Publication of the Goſpel, a remarkable Alteration even in the Writings of thoſe who knew little more of it than by hear-ſay. It is eaſy to perceive ſeveral Truths, and ſometimes Half-Truths, derived from thence; whether they knew it or not: ſeveral Beams of divine Light ſcattered here and there; illuminating their Works, and oftentimes breaking out amidſt Error and Rubbiſh.—Pardon me, Sir, if I think and ſpeak ſomewhat freely upon this Occaſion. Even the *Virtuoſi* of your Sect are this way indebted to thoſe inſpired Writings which they diſown and reject. The Goſpel has enlightened

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even *Them*; however inſenſible they may be of the Favour. I ſhall take the Liberty to affirm, that the beſt Part of that Knowledge which they aſcribe to the Light of Nature, is really ſupernatural: and perhaps it may be ſaid, that they fight Chriſtianity with its own Weapons.—But I believe you think it high time that I ſhould proceed to your next Query; which runs in theſe Words:

3. *Has not the Author, in his laſt Chapter, plainly proved Dr.* CLARKE *inconſiſtent with himſelf; and that one Part of his Lectures claſhes with another?*——— In my Opinion, the chief Thing which the Author has proved in that Chapter, is, that he has groſſly miſunderſtood Dr. *Clarke*, and betrayed the Confuſion of his own Ideas. But let us fairly examine this Point, that it may appear, whether the Subject before us be an Inconſiſtency of Dr. *Clarke*'s, or a Blunder of your Author's.———In ſetting forth the Obligations of Morality, Dr. *Clarke* every where ſpeaks of the *Law of Nature* in the higheſt and moſt advantageous Terms. He conſiders it as ariſing neceſſarily and invariably from the true *Natures*, *Reaſons*, and *Relations of Things*. He repreſents it as a Syſtem of *eternal*, *univerſal*, and *unchangeable* Truths; as a perfect Rule of Action; as a *Law independent of*, and *antecedent to*, all other *Laws* and *Obligations* whatever. He declares, that *all Rational Creatures are obliged to govern themſelves*

ſelves in all their Actions by the eternal Rule of Reaſon; and that it is not only a Law to Creatures, but to God himſelf; who is pleaſed to make it the unalterable Rule of his Actions in the Government of the World. Theſe, and many other Declarations of the like Nature, are made by Dr. *Clarke*; and ſome of them are quoted at large by your Author in the forementioned Chapter.

HAS then Dr. *Clarke* advanced any thing afterwards in Contradiction hereto? Has he any where denied the Truth, or Perfection, of this ſacred Rule? Has he, in any part of his Book, expreſſed himſelf in Derogation from it, or Diminution of it? Not one Syllable can I find to any ſuch Purpoſe.—What then has he done? Why, he has brought a Charge againſt Mankind of Ignorance, Negligence, Perverſeneſs, Stupidity. He has affirmed that they are ſuch weak, frail, corrupt Creatures; that ſometimes they cannot, and very often will not, underſtand, of themſelves, what belongs to their Duty. He has repreſented Men, even the wiſeſt of them, as invincibly ignorant, without Revelation, of ſome Points of the utmoſt Conſequence. And as to the Generality; he has ſhewn that they ſtand in need, upon many Accounts, of more Light, and better Inſtruction; than either their own Reaſon, or that of the ableſt Philoſophers, could ever afford them.——Whether theſe be Facts, or Miſtakes; I deſire to know where lies the

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Inconſiſtency. On the one hand we find,=excellent Truths; a compleat Rule; a moſt divine Law:=On the other hand,=Men corrupt; Faculties neglected; Underſtandings depraved.=I have brought theſe Doctrines cloſe together, to give you, Sir, a fairer Opportunity of diſcovering that Oppoſition which your Author pretends to find between them. But who can find it beſides himſelf? Will any Man ſay, that the Reality, or Perfection of a Rule, depends upon the Skill or Diſpoſition of the Agent? Can the eternal Truth and Reaſon of Things be diſannulled, or any way altered, by the Ignorance or Frowardneſs of Mankind? Why then ſo much Pains taken to bring in Dr. *Clarke* as an Evidence againſt himſelf? Why ſo many Paſſages produced, in order to prove that he had often ſaid; what indeed he always ſaid, and never once denied?

BUT has not Dr. *Clarke* acknowledged likewiſe, that thoſe moral Truths which conſtitute the *Law of Nature*, are undeniable and irreſiſtible? Has he not declared, in Biſhop *Cumberland's* Words, that *the Reaſon of all Men every where, as naturally and neceſſarily aſſents to them, as all Animals conſpire in the Pulſe and Motion of their Heart and Arteries; or as all Men agree in their Judgment concerning the Whiteneſs of Snow, or the Brightneſs of the Sun?* Very true; but what

what follows? Why your Author tells * us, if we will but *have Patience*, we *ſhall ſee*, that *Snow is no longer white, or the Sun bright.*—— But when, or where, ſhall we ſee this ſtrange Promiſe made good? I have patiently waited, and ſearched quite through his Book; and yet can find nothing like it. Whatever Dr. *Clarke* may have ſaid of Men's *Faculties*, or the Abuſe of thoſe Faculties; yet in all his Writings the great *Object* we are ſpeaking of, ever retains its full *Brightneſs*. Not one *Spot* does he ever find in this *intellectual Sun*. If your Author is of a different Opinion; I deſire him to favour us with a ſingle Inſtance. —— But if the *Law of Nature be naturally and neceſſarily aſſented to by the Reaſon of all Men*; how is this conſiſtent with that Ignorance and Darkneſs; which, according to Dr. *Clarke*, prevailed ſo much in the World? Is it poſſible for this Author to imagine, that every undeniable Truth muſt be univerſally known? If I ſhould ſay that all *Geometrical* Truths are *naturally and neceſſarily aſſented to by the Reaſon of all Men*; Few, I am perſuaded, would object to the Propoſition. And yet *Morality*, however neglected, was always more generally known and conſidered, than *Geometry*. Whoever has a real Perception of any Truth, muſt unavoidably aſſent to it, as ſuch: but if he had never examined it, never taken it into his Thoughts; however

* Page 374.

however clear and evident it might be in itſelf; it would be to him as nothing.

YOUR Author asks*, and a ſtrange Queſtion it is, *Can the Law of Nature be clear, and the Light of Nature dim?* Now he often declares that by the *Law of Nature* he means the *eternal Truth, Relations*, and *Reaſons of Things*. Have theſe then any Dependance on the *Faculties* of Men, whether corrupt or uncorrupt? Can *Light* and *Truth* be any way affected by bad *Eyes*, and weak *Underſtandings?* So he ſeems to think by what follows. For he tells us in the next Words, that the *Law of Nature is nothing but what the Light of Nature, or Reaſon dictates*. And his Meaning muſt be, tho' in direct Contradiction to himſelf; that the Law of Nature is, whatever any Man's Reaſon, or *Faculty of Underſtanding*, ſuggeſts to him. What a Foundation is here for a perfect, immutable, eternal Law! For, pray, Sir, is not every Man living confeſſedly fallible? And are not moſt Mens Underſtandings exceedingly erroneous? Judge, I beſeech you, how far this Author's *Light of Nature* is to be truſted; and whether it ought to be looked upon as a ſafer Guide than the *Goſpel*. Sometimes the *Law of Nature* is a Syſtem of eternal Truths; and ſometimes the poor Opinions, and precarious Perceptions of weak Men. That is, *the Snow is ſometimes white*, and *the Sun bright*, and ſometimes neither: as the Author undertook to ſhew us.

* Page 376.

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BUT to return; as Men muſt neceſſarily aſſent to the Truths and Obligations of Morality, when really perceived; ſo Dr. *Clarke* has owned, and every where maintained, that the principal of thoſe Truths are actually perceived by all Men; excepting thoſe who wilfully ſhut their Eyes and Underſtandings: which indeed is, and ever has been, too often the Caſe; as he himſelf obſerves and complains.—As no Man by the Force of meer natural Reaſon was able to diſcover the entire Syſtem of moral Relations, or every Truth which concerned human Duty; ſo

* Diſcourſe of Nat. and Rev. Relig. Ed. 6. pag. 38.

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are viſible to all Men who have Sight and Underſtanding: but they may perceive neither, if they chuſe to wink, or fall aſleep.

HAVING thus ſeen, as far as was needful, what it is that Dr. *Clarke* has *ſaid*; let us inquire a little further what it is that he has *unſaid*; according to the Charge which your Author brings againſt him. Of the former, the Subſtance is, a high Character given of the moral Law; and ſome Conceſſions in favour of human Underſtanding. Let us hear what it is, that your Author calls the Doctor's *new Scheme*. It conſiſts, he ſays *, in ſuppoſing, *that tho' in the original uncorrupted State of human Nature; Right Reaſon may juſtly be ſuppoſed to have been a ſufficient Guide, and a Principle powerful enough to have preſerved Men in the conſtant practiſe of their Duty; yet upon the Fall, Mankind were in a very bad State; as wanting greater Help and Aſſiſtance, than the Light of Nature could afford them. And that there was plainly wanting ſome extraordinary and ſupernatural Aſſiſtance, above the reach of bare Reaſon and Philoſophy; to recover Mankind out of their univerſally degenerate State, into a State ſuitable to the original Dignity of their Nature.* — Now whether theſe Aſſertions be true or falſe; was it not incumbent on this Author, conſidering what he had promiſed, to ſhew their Inconſiſtency with the foregoing Doctrines? Would not every Reader naturally expect it? But this is ſo far from being done;

* *Chriſtianity as old*, &c. pag. 374.

done; that I cannot find your Author ſo much as attempting it. And indeed if he had attempted it, he muſt unavoidably have loſt his Labour.—For may not Men be very *imperfect*, and in a *very bad State*, notwithſtanding the *Perfection of the Law of Nature?* And tho' *the Difference of Good and Evil be naturally diſcernible*, and *the main Branches of Morality* plain and obvious; yet might not *ſupernatural Help and Aſſiſtance be much wanted?* If Mens Minds were not only *imperfect*, but much *depraved*; of ſome moral Truths they might have no Knowledge at all; of others a very defective one. They might likewiſe be very unmindful and regardleſs of what they did know; and even doze themſelves into a ſpiritual Lethargy, not removeable by natural Methods. If not only their Underſtandings were depraved, but alſo their Manners very corrupt; they might want many *ſupernatural Helps*. The Means of Pardon, Reconciliation, Grace; ſtronger Motives, and more certain Encouragements, to *ceaſe to do Evil*, and *learn to do well*; ſuitable Influences from above: in a word, a vigorous Application to their Hopes and Fears; and an awakening Proſpect into another World.———Theſe Doctrines therefore of Dr. *Clarke*'s are ſo far from being contradictory, or repugnant to each other, that they do not in the leaſt interfere.

BUT tho' your Author has not proved, nor could prove, theſe latter Aſſertions *inconſiſtent* with the former; yet he had a mind

to try, it ſeems, whether he could not diſprove the Truth of them. Let us then go ſo far out of our way, as to hear what he objects, and how he reaſons. *This is ſuppoſing*, ſays he*, *that God had left all Mankind for* 4000 *Years together, and even the greateſt Part to this Day, deſtitute of ſufficient Means to do their Duty, and to preſerve themſelves from ſinking into a corrupt and degenerate State; and that it was impoſſible for them when thus ſunk, to recover themſelves; and yet that God (their Duty being the ſame after, as before the Fall) expected Impoſſibilities from them*, viz. *either to preſerve themſelves from thus falling; or, if fallen, to recover themſelves.*—Does this Author imagine, that all Mankind, during the long Term he ſpeaks of, were left wholly to the Guidance of their own Reaſon, and the Glimmerings of the Light of Nature? Not to mention the Caſe of the *Jews*, were there not Footſteps, or rather Tracks of Revelation, in moſt Places, thro' that whole Period? To make Allowance for this, would perhaps have damaged the Sound of his Argument; and therefore he omitted it. However, let us take him in his own way.—That Dr. *Clarke ſuppoſed* no ſuch Things as are here told us, this Author knew very well: and that his Words above-cited ſuppoſe no ſuch Things, is my Buſineſs to ſhew. But in truth they ſufficiently clear themſelves, even at firſt ſight. Does it follow,

* Pag. 375.

low, from Man's being in *a bad State*; that his Caſe is quite remedileſs, and deſperate? Does it follow, from his want of more *Light*, and better *Helps*; that he is no longer an *Agent*, but a *meer Machine?* Does it follow, from his Inability to riſe up to *the original Dignity of his Nature*; that he might be forced to ſit ſtill, and deſpond? And from which of the Premiſes does it follow; that *God expected Impoſſibilities from him?*—— This Author ſhould have remembered the Title of his own Book. If *Chriſtianity* be *as old as the Creation*; how comes he to ſuppoſe all the Benefits of it confined to the latter Ages? Though after the Fall, it was not in the Power of Mankind to recover that State of Purity, and Perfection, from which they fell; yet they never wanted *ſufficient Means* for *doing* what was then become *their Duty*; in the Senſe before explained. If following the beſt Light they could get; they acted conformably to it, and *did well: ſhould they not be accepted?* But *Acceptance* is one thing, and *Perfection* another. *The Judge of all the Earth* would certainly *do right*. He would not therefore *expect Impoſſibilities*. Before the Fall, He expected, as well He might, that Man would continue innocent and perfect: after the Fall, He expected ſincere and careful Endeavours, in reſpect of Knowledge and Practiſe: and for unavoidable Deficiences, had decreed, and promiſed, to make ſuitable Proviſion, in due time. In the mean while, what

was

was in their Power; that He required, and no more.——From the Impotence of fallen Man, the Author goes on to infer; that *a State of Degeneracy and Corruption muſt be the State which God deſigned he ſhould be in; and that it would ſeem not only in vain, but a Crime in him to endeavour to change it.* A bold Concluſion; but a very weak one. God's original Deſign was Man's Innocence and Perfection. His ſubſequent Deſign was, that fallen Man ſhould endeavour to come back, as near as he could, to his firſt State; and rely on his Promiſe for a Redeemer to come. Let your Author ſhew, if he can, that what he calls *the Doctor's new Scheme*, infers, or ſuppoſes any thing more than this. But let him not give us Amuſements, inſtead of Arguments.

GIVE me Leave, Sir, to proceed a little further in my Search, that we may ſee whether your Author has ſucceeded better in ſome other Paſſages, produced by him in ſupport of his main Charge. That which follows ſeems to be cited * by him with Indignation. *Even thoſe few extraordinary Men of the Philoſophers, who did ſincerely endeavour to reform Mankind; were themſelves entirely ignorant of ſome Doctrines, abſolutely neceſſary for bringing about this great End of the Reformation and Recovery of Mankind.—— Their whole Attempt to diſcover the Truth of Things, and to inſtruct others therein, was like wandring in the wide Sea; without knowing*

* Page 376.

ing whither to go, or which way to take, or having any Guide to conduct them. This Obſervation, your Author tells us, was made partly *to ſhew, that the Fault was not in the Creatures, but in the Creator.* And not content with this horrid Imputation; he peremptorily affirms afterwards, that according to Dr. *Clarke*, *the Fault* muſt be *in the eternal, univerſal, and unchangeable Law of Nature.* —Here then the Doctor is directly attacked; but with no other Weapons, than bare groundleſs Aſſertions. The Accuſer has ſhewn himſelf ſufficiently forward; but his Evidence lags: as indeed well it may. Whatever Defects the Doctor might obſerve in the fore-mentioned *Philoſophers*; I am certain he neither would, nor could, find any *Fault* with the *Law of Nature.* When your Author produces the leaſt Shadow of a Proof to the contrary, it ſhall be conſidered. And I am equally certain, that ſo wiſe, ſo good, ſo excellent a Man, would never *charge God fooliſhly.* He had juſter Ideas of the Divine Majeſty, and humbler Sentiments of Human Nature; than to imagine that Men had any Right, any Pretence, to be their own Carvers. He knew perfectly well, that the *Philoſophers* had no more Reaſon to repine at the Imperfections of Human Nature; than *Peaſants* have to grumble that they are not made Philoſophers. Whatever Doctrines thoſe Philoſophers were ignorant of; 'tis enough to ſilence all Objections, that no more was *required* either of them,

them, or the Bulk of Mankind; than according to what was *given.*

If any *Philoſopher* happened to *wander* never ſo widely, or to be even quite loſt; could the Rules of Morality, *the Reaſons and Relations of Things*, be loſt with him? Whatever Accidents or Misfortunes he might meet with in the *wide Sea*; could Truth, *eternal Truth*, be either ſunk or ſhip-wrecked? To ſpeak plainly; The Law of Nature, for that very Reaſon, becauſe it is unchangeable, neither has, nor can have, any Dependance on human Underſtandings.—But why ſhould it ſeem ſtrange, that Men ſhould *wander in the wide Sea*, without Revelation; when we find they ſtill wander there, even with it? Is it not much ſtranger, that in theſe Days, Men ſhould ſail without the *Compaſs*; and venture, at the ſame time, to be every Man his own *Pilot?* None of the antient Philoſophers could wander more widely, more wilfully, more deſperately, than this very Author; who deſpiſing the Lights of Heaven, truſts all to his own Arm, and his own Rudder: and that upon a very unſound, and infirm Bottom. I heartily wiſh he may liſten to ſober Counſels in time; and thereby eſcape thoſe Rocks and Quickſands to which he ſo raſhly expoſes himſelf.

The Doctor's Scheme, he further tells * us, *out-does that of the moſt rigid Predeſtinarians; for that at all times ſaves the Elect: but here are no Elect; but all, for many Ages, are inextricably*

* Page 377.

extricably involved in a moſt depraved, corrupted, and impious State.—If we knew not Dr. *Clarke*, and were Strangers to his Book; might we not conclude from hence, that he had expreſſly reprobated all the unenlightened World? However this Author may think fit to ſwell his Pages, or make empty Flouriſhes; he knows very well that the Doctor never had a Sentiment of this Nature.—But how does it appear, that there are *no Elect* in the *Doctor's Scheme?* It is plain from his Writings, that he looked upon all good and virtuous Men as *elected*; whenever, or wherever, they might happen to live. But how *elected?* To all the Bleſſings and Privileges of Chriſtianity? That he does not ſay; neither do I. Let it ſuffice, if he ſuppoſed them *elected* to a State of Happineſs hereafter; through the Merits of the all-ſufficient and univerſal Redeemer.

YOUR Author is ſo cautious, that he *dare not ſay there is the leaſt Difference between the Law of Nature, and the Goſpel; for that would ſuppoſe*, he tells* us, *ſome Defect in one of them, and reflect on the Author of both.*—But he need not be under any ſuch Apprehenſions. For it would not ſuppoſe a Defect in either of them. It ſuppoſes indeed a Defect ſomewhere; and let every Man's Conſcience tell him where. The *Law of Nature* always was, and always will be, a compleat Rule of Action for Mankind; conſidered as Rational Beings, and Moral Agents.

But

* Page 378.

But Proviſion was, on many Accounts, wanting for Tranſgreſſors and Sinners. The whole Species was tainted, and every Individual guilty, in ſome Degree or other. In this common Exigence, this univerſal Diſtreſs; does it any way *reflect on the Author* of the Goſpel, to ſuppoſe him, among other Reliefs, opening Mens Minds, enlightening their Underſtandings, and preparing them for the Reception of their eternal Duty? If they had, in ſome meaſure, loſt ſight of the *Law of Nature*; could it be amiſs to ſet it before them in ſuch a Light as was moſt agreeable to their Condition? Or even to add ſuch Precepts, as might conduce to their Recovery, and Growth in Virtue?—This then is ſo far from amounting to any *Reflection* on *the Author* of the Goſpel; that it is a clear Proof, and a ſignal Inſtance, both of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs. And it is ſo far from arguing any *Defect*, either in *the Law*, or *the Goſpel*, that it rather argues the Perfection of both. For had not the Law been perfect; Men would not have been ſo incapable of coming up to it, without ſupernatural Aſſiſtance. Their falling ſo much ſhort of it, is equally a Proof of their own Defects, and the Fullneſs of the Law. And as to the Goſpel; it could not be leſs perfect than the Law, becauſe it took it entirely in: and, at the ſame time, ſuperadded ſuch Rules, as were ſuitable to the Wants and Infirmities of Mankind. If it was not, in itſelf, more perfect than the Law; it was better adapted to their Circumſtances, and the Diſadvantages of

their

their ſinful State.—In vain then does your Author inſiſt on the Perfection and Immutability of the *Law of Nature*. The Rules which *Chriſtianity* has annexed; neither diminiſh it, nor alter it: on the contrary, they help Men to fulfil it; and are a wiſe Proviſion for human Frailty. The Law is ever the ſame; and had Men been ſo too, they would neither have needed Redemption, nor Revelation.

BUT to proceed; *Is it not ſtrange*, ſays your Author, *to ſee ſo judicious a Divine write after ſuch a manner; as if he thought the beſt way to ſupport the Dignity of Revelation, was to derogate from the immutable and eternal Law of Nature?*——And is it not ſtrange, ſay I, that ſo acute an Author ſhould confound the moſt diſtinct Ideas; and when, by ſo doing, he has run himſelf into an Abſurdity; place it to Dr. *Clarke*'s Account? When an illiterate Man laments his Ignorance; does he *derogate* from Learning? When I complain of the Weakneſs of my Sight; do I derogate from Sunſhine? When Dr. *Clarke* affirms that Mens intellectual Powers were impaired; does he derogate from eternal Truths?

SOON after, Dr. *Clarke* is accuſed of *aſſerting that in the Law of Nature there are undeniable Defects; and yet owning that God governs all his own Actions by it.*—In juſtice to Dr. *Clarke*, I muſt call upon this Author, either to make good this Charge, or to retract it. Has the Doctor any where ſaid, that *God governs his Actions* by the Light of our im-

perfect Ideas? No; but he has asserted that God governs his Actions by the eternal Truth and Reason of Things; that sacred Rule which directs, or ought to direct, the Actions of all intelligent Beings. Here then there can be no *Defects*; nothing being more evident than that the Rule which is observed by the Deity, must be perfect. Nor is it possible to imagine that Dr. *Clarke* should ever maintain the contrary. He has indeed asserted, that there are *undeniable Defects* in *the Light of Nature*: but this is so far from being fit to govern the Divine Actions, that it is not sufficient to govern our own.

BUT why does the Doctor *extol Revelation for those very Things it borrows from that Law?—Borrowing* does he call it; and *from* the Law? If it must be called borrowing, the whole is borrowed. But why such diminishing Expressions, and contemptuous Insinuations? Will any Man presume to question God's Right to his own eternal Truths? His they are, and must be; however they are made known to Mankind. Whether we find them written in our Hearts, or in the Books of Inspiration; the Truths are the same, and the Law-giver the same. They essentially constitute both the Natural, and Evangelical Law.—Should any Man say that St. *Paul's Church* had *borrowed from* the *Fabric* its *Foundations*, its *Walls*, its *Pillars*, its *Arches*, *&c.* what should we think of such an Observation? But should he go on to affirm, that the Structure was

either weakened, or blemiſhed, by the *Communion-Table*, and the *Font*; we might then conclude his Remarks certainly *borrowed* from your Author's *Light of Nature*. I ſhall only add, that whatever the *Goſpel* may have *borrowed from the Law*; there are ſome Things which this Author would do well to *borrow* from either *Law* or *Goſpel*.

IT is not my Intention to go through his whole laſt Chapter. I preſume, Sir, I have gone as far, and perhaps farther, into it, than was neceſſary for the anſwering of your Query. Beſides, I perceive all the following Queries are taken out of it; ſo that in anſwering them, I ſhall have an Opportunity of conſidering the principal Points remaining. And indeed a great part of it is nothing more than either Repetition, or Excurſion.

4. *Is it not a Libel on the Dignity of Human Nature, and a high Reflection on the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of its Author; to repreſent All, but one Pair, in a corrupt, degenerate State* * *?*—If the Charge be groundleſs; let it be *a Libel:* but if it be fact; is it not a Libel on Truth itſelf, to call it ſo? Setting aſide the Aſſurances of Revelation, have not the beſt and wiſeſt Men in all Ages confeſſed and lamented the univerſal Corruption of Mankind? The Weakneſs of their Underſtandings, and the Pravity of their Wills? Are all Hiſtories *Libels on human Nature?* They all atteſt this melancholy Truth, and confute

* Page 390.

confute your Author's Pretence. Their beſt Deſcriptions are allayed; and their faireſt Characters ſhaded. Not to mention the vile and vicious Part of Mankind, whoſe Corruptions are confeſſed; let us view the reſt. Nay, let us pick out the Flowers of our Species; the illuſtrious Few; who diſtinguiſh themſelves, and dignify human Nature. Have not even Theſe their Imperfections and Infirmities, their Faults and their Follies? Is not their Knowledge a Mixture of Light and Darkneſs; and their Conduct a Compoſition of Wiſdom and Weakneſs, Good and Evil? *In many Things* have they *all offended*; through Negligence very frequently; and ſometimes in Diſobedience to the Dictates of their own Minds. If they themſelves are to be appealed to in this Matter, the Queſtion is decided: for they are ever remarkably conſcious of their own Defects, and ready to acknowledge them.

BUT how is ſuch a Repreſentation of human Nature, *a high Reflection on the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of its Author?* Is it affirmed, that God required any Man to *do*, more than he could *know?* Or to *know* any Thing beyond his *Capacity?* Whatever Portion of Light and Knowledge Man poſſeſſed, or had in his Power; fallen or unfallen, it was his Buſineſs and his Duty to make a proper Uſe of it; and to walk by it honeſtly and uprightly. As far as he did this, his Conduct would be approved both by God and Man. Even in that dark and degenerate State which

we are ſpeaking of, Man was not wholly deſtitute of Light. Many Things he ſtill knew; and might have known many more. And what he knew, that he might practiſe, if he would: for he was ſtill an Agent. Some kind of Power he muſt have to *do well*; for otherwiſe he could not have *done ill*. If he found himſelf expoſed to many and great Temptations, this might occaſion Difficulties and Conflicts: but it could extend no further. It could not turn an Agent into a Patient; could not bring him under a Neceſſity of Sinning; for that is a Contradiction. Had there been no Choice; there could not have been either Vice or Virtue. There might have been an Obliquity in his Actions; but that Obliquity would have been not Moral, but Natural; not his Crime, but his Misfortune.—Whatever he *might* do; without queſtion he *would* often fail and fall ſhort. But what follows from hence? Nothing more than the great need Men had of thoſe Divine Aſſiſtances, about which we are contending. The weaker and more ignorant they were, the more they wanted freſh Light, and ſupernatural Aid.

BUT if degenerate Man, inſtead of acting and endeavouring according to his Power; ſhould repine at his Lot, and murmur againſt Providence: how would he anſwer it?—— Should he refuſe to cultivate his Underſtanding, becauſe he found Weeds in it: Should he ſuffer his Appetites and Paſſions to run wild, becauſe he could not keep them in exact

Order:

Order: Should he ſow no Seed, becauſe the Soil did not pleaſe him; and plant no Virtues, becauſe they would not grow faſt enough: Should he let all his Faculties wither, becauſe he could not bring them to Perfection; and his Mind become a mere *Wilderneſs*, becauſe he found himſelf diſpoſſeſſed of *the Garden of Eden:* what Account would he be able to give of ſuch Husbandry? Would it be *a high Reflection* on his Lord, or himſelf?—In ſhort, ſuch Objections as theſe are themſelves *Libels on human Nature*; and Proofs of that very *Degeneracy*, which they are meant to diſprove. If Men ſunk themſelves far below the Perfection of Angels, and even that of their own original State: ſurely it does not follow, that they muſt continue ſinking further and further; till they arrive at a State of Brutality. While Man had any Features left of his Maker's Image, he had juſt Cauſe to be thankful, and none to complain; unleſs of his own Folly, and Ingratitude.

YOUR Author, it ſeems, can find no * *Difference, in relation to the Goodneſs of God, between Mens being created in a State of Corruption*, and permitted *to fall unavoidably into it.* For that I ſuppoſe is what he means. To ſay, as he expreſſes himſelf, that *God cauſed them to fall into it, by the Folly of Adam*; is to ſay, what is not fit to be either anſwered, or repeated. Suppoſing then his Meaning to be what I have repreſented it;

* Page 389.

it; how comes it to paſs, that he ſhould overlook ſo manifeſt, ſo obvious a Difference?—Reaſon aſſures us, that whatever comes immediately out of the Hands of the Creator, muſt be perfect in its Kind. It is evidently inconſiſtent with the Rectitude of the Divine Nature, to create any Being corrupt. That the Works of an infinitely perfect Agent ſhould be defective in this Senſe; is a Suppoſition that implies Repugnance and Incongruity between Cauſe and Effect. As all Creatures are finite; they muſt indeed be ſo far imperfect: and the lower any of them are placed in the Scale of Beings, the greater muſt their Imperfection be. But it can never conſiſt with the Perfection of the Creator, to produce what is blemiſhed; and what falls below the Idea of its Kind.

CAN then your Author ſhew the ſame Abſurdity in ſuppoſing, that God ſhould permit his Creatures to degenerate? In no ſenſe, in no reſpect, could the Deity be anſwerable for the Sin of our Firſt Parents. He *foreſaw* it indeed, as the Author obſerves; but what then? Was it reaſonable that God ſhould either not have made them *free*; or have over-ruled their Freedom? Surely the Author does not ſubſcribe to thoſe *Indian* Sentiments which he produced immediately before. If it be fit for the Creator to make free Creatures, as it undeniably is; it muſt be fit, on the ſame Accounts, to continue to them the Uſe of that Liberty.——But ſtill it

will be asked; why ſhould their Poſterity be Sufferers? Why ſhould they feel any Effects of that original Tranſgreſſion, to which they never conſented? Here then I deſire to know, whether any wrong was done them? They had no more Title to the Perfections of the *firſt Man*; than they had to the Perfections of an *Angel*. Whatever occaſioned a Diminution of their Privileges; they had more left than they could lay any Claim to. They had ſtill a valuable Remainder: and if they made a good Uſe of it, they had juſt Grounds to hope, that it would turn to Account. Their *State* was *bad* in Compariſon of Man's original State: but what was it in Compariſon of the Creatures below them? In ſhort, no Man living had juſt Cauſe to complain of any Corruptions; but thoſe which were ſtrictly and perſonally his own. —— Objections *ab ignorantia* are endleſs. If the Affairs of the World are in the Hands of an infinitely wiſe Governor; there muſt unavoidably be many Events, and many Occurrences, utterly incomprehenſible to our narrow Minds. How can we imagine ourſelves capable of piercing the Secrets of Providence? Can Folly judge of perfect Wiſdom; or Ignorance of Omniſcience? —— Whatever indeed is contrary to Truth, or Rectitude; we may ſafely conclude cannot come from the All-perfect Being. If therefore your Author can ſhew any Thing in the preſent Caſe repugnant thereto; or if he can prove the Deity in any reſpect obliged, either

to

to prevent the Fall of Man, or to hinder the natural Effects of it from deſcending to Poſterity; let him maintain the Integrity and Perfection of Mankind without Oppoſition.

5. *Is not that Law, which is a moſt perfect Rule to the moſt perfect Being; perfect enough for his imperfect Creatures? Can this Rule ever loſe its Virtue? and will it not now render Men as acceptable to God as ever* *?——The *Law* here ſpoken of is not only *perfect enough for imperfect Creatures*; but *too perfect:* as I doubt not but your Author has found it, as well as the reſt of Mankind. This Revelation teaches; and univerſal Experience confirms it. This *Believers* confeſs with Grief and Shame; and if *Unbelievers* will not join with them in the Acknowledgment of this ſad Truth, they are ſure to join in the Proof of it. Nay, the leſs willingly they own it; the more ſtrongly they prove it.——We own, and maintain, that the eternal Law of Reaſon and Truth is a perfect Rule of Action even to the All-perfect Creator; much more to his Creatures. What would the Author infer from hence? No more than this. Since Men have, and always had, this perfect Law; what occaſion for *Prophets* and *Revelation?* I anſwer, as I did before, that ſuppoſing this perfect Law perfectly known; which was not the Caſe: ſtill they had the ſame Occaſion for *Prophets* and *Revelation*; that they have for *Phyſicians*

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and *Medicines*. Mankind had broken their Conſtitution; contracted very ill Habits; and laboured under a Complication of Diſtempers. Their Vitals were touched; and they were become even *ſick unto Death*. What Means to be uſed? What Methods to be taken? Your Author preſcribes as aforeſaid; and argues, that whatever Rule, and whatever Regimen, are ſufficient for the ſoundeſt Perſons, muſt be ſufficient for all Men, and in all Caſes.

BUT he asks, *can this Rule ever loſe its Virtue?* I anſwer, it never can. But Men may loſe *their Virtue*: and when this is the Caſe, they may want ſuch Helps as would be uſeleſs to more perfect Creatures. They may want ſubordinate Rules, to correct their Diſorders, ſtrengthen their Minds, and refit them for the Uſe of the ſupreme Rule.——The Perfection of a Rule is not the only Thing to be conſidered. That which is *abſolutely* good, and compleat in itſelf, may be *relatively* deficient. Regard therefore muſt be had to the Condition, the Circumſtances, and Capacity of the Agent. We know what ſort of Rules are uſually given to young Children. Should any Man condemn them, and give this Reaſon for it; that what Rules are proper and *perfect enough* for grown Men, muſt needs be proper and *perfect enough for imperfect* Childhood: what ſhould we think of his Judgment? Should we not conclude that he wanted himſelf ſome of thoſe Rules which

he

he condemned?——Perhaps this Alluſion will be turned againſt me. Perhaps your Author will ask upon this Occaſion; Does then Chriſtianity conſider Men as *Minors*, and even treat them as *Children?* In one Senſe, it certainly does. And however ſupercilious, or ſelf-ſufficient ſome Men may be; however unwilling to acknowledge ſo diſparaging a Truth; moſt certain it is, that all Mankind have too many of the Weakneſſes of Children. It would be well if they reſembled them more in ſome Things. Let them be as much as poſſible *Men in Underſtanding*; but let them not diſdain thoſe Qualities, which are ſo remarkable in Children, and ſo amiable every where: their Simplicity, Sincerity, Freedom from Guile, and Love of Truth. Had theſe generally prevailed; Chriſtianity would never have been corrupted by one Claſs of Men, nor rejected by another.——But to return; Chriſtianity neither abrogates nor diſcountenances, the leaſt Tittle of the Law of Nature. On the contrary, as it ſets the whole in the ſtrongeſt Light; ſo it earneſtly recommends, and inculcates above all things, the Obſervation of it. Thoſe additional Rules, and ſubſidiary Precepts, which we find intermixed, are not intended to ſupply the Defects of the Law; for there are none ſuch: nor to improve, or exalt it; for that is impoſſible: but are deſigned meerly to help our Infirmities; and bring us back to that Line of Duty from which we had ſwerved. By the

the Aids of the Goſpel, Men are enabled, and inclined, to act conformably to that glorious Rule; to recover, in ſome meaſure, the Dignity of their Nature; and *walk worthy* of their high and heavenly *Vocation.*

6. *Would any human Legiſlator, if he found it for the Good of his Subjects to add new Laws; not promulgate them to all his People? Or can a Being be denominated merciful and good, who is ſo only to a few; but cruel and unmerciful to the reſt*?*—That is, if there muſt be a Revelation, your Author expects it ſhould be univerſal; communicated equally to all Nations, and in all Ages. Preſumptuous Man! Why will he throw himſelf into ſuch a *Dilemma?* If his Reaſoning hold, it proves a great deal too much: if it do not hold, the Conſequence is not only Error, but Blaſphemy. If it prove true, that God has ever made a Revelation; at any particular time, or in any particular Place; then his Wiſdom and Goodneſs are here arraigned, and his Adminiſtration cenſured.———But does this Author really think, that God is obliged to govern the World by ſuch levelling Rules as are here ſuppoſed? Is it not undoubted Fact, that the Bleſſings of Heaven are conferred in a quite different Manner? For has not God made ſome of his Creatures, Angels; ſome, Men; and ſome, Inſects? Even in the ſame Species; what Diverſity of Talents, and Variety

* Page 399, & 401.

riety of Conditions? Among Men; are not the *High* and the *Low*, the *Rich* and the *Poor*, the Learned and the Unlearned, all the Works of his Hands, and the Appointments of his Providence?——What a Handle does ſuch an Argument give for a general Diſcontent? It directly tends to irritate and excite all the leſs happy Part of Mankind; to fill their Minds with Sedition, and their Mouths with Clamour.——Would any Man diſprove the exceſſive Heats under the Line; or the extreme Cold of the Polar Regions; this Argument is at his ſervice. Would he confute the Hiſtories of *Greece* and *Rome*; and make it appear that they could not poſſibly be more knowing, or more learned, than the Nations round about them; the ſame Argument, if concluſive, will ſerve his Purpoſe.

To convince you, Sir, that I am not declaiming; nor putting any falſe Colours on the Author's Reaſoning; I ſhall proceed to explain, and enforce what I have ſaid. I have already obſerved, and it is manifeſt from all Natural Appearances, that God's *original Gifts* are actually diſpenſed in a very unequal Manner. And foraſmuch as all Gifts are, and muſt be *free*; it is evident there cannot be the leaſt Pretence of *Injuſtice* in the Caſe. But the Queſtion is, how ſuch an Inequality is conſiſtent with the Divine *Rectitude?* For is not God ever influenced and directed by the true *Reaſons of Things?*

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Moſt certainly. But then I ask; whether there may not be an Infinity of Reaſons quite out of the Reach of all human Sight? Will your Author preſume to ſay, that God can only regard ſuch Reaſons as are diſcoverable by Men? Not only Revelation, but common Senſe aſſures us, that His Reaſons and *His Ways*, muſt be often *paſt* their *finding out*. The Actions even of wiſe Men are ſometimes conducted by ſuch Rules and Reaſons; as ignorant Minds have not the leaſt Glimpſe of. How infinitely greater is the Diſparity between Human Underſtanding, and the Divine?—— However, we are not entirely in the Dark concerning this Matter. We are able to perceive ſome Reaſons of theſe Providential Inequalities; and are well acquainted with this general one, which probably holds quite through; *viz.* that they are eſſential to the Order of God's Works. That Variety, Diſtinction, Subordination, which are viſible every where, and prevail all over the Creation; as they often conduce to the Benefit of Mankind: ſo, whether they do or not, they are ſure to promote the Beauty of Nature, and the Perfection of the Univerſe.

THIS being premiſed; I inſiſt upon it, that the great Governor of the World is as much at Liberty, and that conſiſtently with the Wiſdom and Rectitude of His Government, to communicate *unequally* Light and Knowledge, whether *natural* or *revealed*; as any other original Bleſſing whatever. As

to *natural Light*, the Fact is notorious; and the Fitneſs of its being unequally communicated is not directly called in queſtion. Let us then conſider the Caſe of *Revelation*; and ſee what Difference appears, and what your Author objects.—Whatever Portion of natural Light is poſſeſſed by any Man, or is fairly in his Power; he is accountable for that, and that only. It is not expected of him, that he ſhould obſerve any Laws which were never promulged, or made known to him. Though Revelation would better his Condition; yet many Bleſſings are enjoyed by him, for which he ought to be thankful. And if he uſe his beſt Endeavours in the Improvement of himſelf; he has juſt Grounds to hope for many more, and much greater. To repreſent him therefore as *cruelly and unmercifully* dealt with, is equally repugnant to Truth and Piety. Does it follow, becauſe he wants thoſe Advantages and Privileges of Revelation which ſome of his Fellow-Creatures enjoy; that therefore he is ill uſed? Are all Favours not communicated; Grievances, and Grounds of Complaint? Give ſuch Suppoſitions as theſe their full Scope; and there would be no ſuch Thing as either Gratitude, or Contentment upon the Face of the Earth.—But if it be for the Good of all Men to enjoy Revelation; why is it ever withheld? And if, ſay I, it be for the Good of all Men to be transformed into Angels; why

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is it not done? Your Author tells * us, that ſuch *narrow Notions are inconſiſtent with the Character of a Being of unlimited Benevolence.* I deſire to know what he means by *unlimited Benevolence.* Has he never heard, nor conſidered, that the Effects of God's Power and Benevolence are *limited* by the Rules of his Wiſdom, and the Reaſons of Things? Can he imagine that the utmoſt Poſſibilities of Good are to be produced at all Times, and in all Places; without regard to the Order, Proportion, and Harmony of the whole Syſtem? Do the Varieties of Providence, and the Inequalities of God's Diſpenſations, appear to this Author, Arguments of *Inconſtancy in the Divine Conduct?* Such a way of thinking is not to be accounted for, unleſs he ſuppoſe, that all the Reaſons of Things are within his own Comprehenſion.

BUT he further objects †, that the Doctrine which he is oppoſing *ſuppoſes Chriſtians to have Means and Opportunities of gaining a higher Degree, or Kind, of Happineſs hereafter than other Men:* which, according to him, is repreſenting the Deity as acting *arbitrarily*, and *partially*, and inconſiſtently with their *State of Probation.* To act *arbitrarily*, and *partially*; is to act without regard to the Right of the Caſe, and the Reaſons of Things. But I preſume your Author muſt mean, either acting without Reaſon, or from ſuch Reaſons as are unknown to *him.* I have ſpoken

* Pag. 409. † Pag. 408.

ſpoken to this Point already; and ſhall only add, that for him to judge of Providential Diſpenſations in the dark; and conclude there are no Reaſons, where he can ſee none, is the utmoſt Wildneſs of Imagination. Inſtead of reverencing the Deity, this may rather be looked upon as deifying himſelf.—How, and wherein good Chriſtians will be diſtinguiſhed hereafter from good Heathens; is a Point not poſſible for us to determine at preſent. And indeed it would be Folly to ſay any thing at all about it; if it were not in ſome meaſure neceſſary, in order to ſilence ſo clamorous an Objection.

WHAT the Privileges and ſuperior Advantages of Chriſtians *will* be, I preſume not to conjecture: but I humbly ſuppoſe they *may* be, in general, either *natural* or *poſitive*. By *natural* Advantages, I mean ſuch a ſuperior Degree of Happineſs, as is the natural Conſequence of ſuperior Improvements in Virtue. Theſe ſuperior Improvements in Virtue may be conſidered, as the natural Effect of that Opportunity which Providence gave them of becoming Chriſtians. And that Opportunity is what I call an *original Gift*; which, like other Bleſſings of the ſame kind, is conferred in ſuch a Manner, and by ſuch Rules, as are only known to the all-wiſe Donor. I add, that if the unequal Diſtribution of theſe original Gifts be *arbitrary*; the whole Scale of Created Beings is arbitrary from Top to Bottom. God has indeed a Right to diſpenſe

them as he pleaſes: but whatever is moſt agreeable to Reaſon and Rectitude, is ſure to pleaſe Him beſt.—To what Purpoſe does your Author alledge the Certainty of God's *rewarding Men according to their Works*; when the Queſtion is, whether ſome Men may not be originally enabled to fit themſelves for higher Degrees of Happineſs, than others? Or why does he look upon this Diverſity of original Gifts as inconſiſtent with a *State of Probation?* Whether Men be placed unequally, or all upon a Level, is a Point that no way affects their Probation. In ſuch a State They are tried how they will manage what is committed to their Truſt; whether it be more or leſs. If one Man have originally *Two Talents*, another *Five*; though their Conduct, if equal, will be equally approved; yet the original Difference may remain, and be perpetuated. In ſhort, different Degrees of Happineſs as naturally reſult from different Improvements; as different Improvements are produced by different Opportunities.

BUT further; good Chriſtians may not only have *natural* Advantages hereafter, above Heathens; but likewiſe *poſitive* ones. If your Author can find no Reaſon for ſuch Diſtinctions; I ſhall endeavour to point it out to him. I will not urge that *many Manſions* above may be as fitting as many Ranks and Degrees here below: nor will I inquire whether ſuch Diſtinctions may not contribute to the Order and Perfection of a heavenly State,

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as well as an earthly one. I only ask, whether the *Body* of faithful Chriſtians may not be juſtly diſtinguiſhed from a regard to their meritorious *Head?* Whether on *His* Account they may not have good Reaſon to hope for ſuch a Pre-eminence? If the higheſt Honours be due to Him; is it not natural to conclude, that ſome Share will redound to Thoſe who ſtand in a peculiar Relation to Him? And though the Opportunity of entring into ſuch a Relation was the original Favour of Heaven; yet that alters not the Caſe, nor is any Ground for Objection; as hath been already ſhewn. No Reaſon can be alledged againſt it; but what equally holds againſt the ſuperior Advantages of Angels. Imparity and Diſtinction in the ſame Species, may be as agreeable to Order and Rectitude; as the Subordination of one Species to another.——Whereas then your Author complains of *ſome People being made Favourites without any Conſideration of their Merits*; he is deſired to view this Matter in another Light. Strictly ſpeaking, we contend only for *one Favourite*, one illuſtrious Favourite; whoſe Merits are unqueſtionable, and moſt abundant. The nearer any Part of Mankind ſtand to *Him*; the greater Luſtre they derive from Him, and the more glorious is their Situation.———Nor is there any Thing in this Account tending to the Diſadvantage or Diminution of any moral Worth. No good Work can be loſt; no Virtue fall to the Ground.

Ground. Whoever has done well, or endeavoured well, according to his Abilities; will receive in full Proportion. Nay he will receive, through the Merits above-mentioned, vaſtly beyond his Proportion. But let him not complain, if others be preferred, and diſtinguiſhed, on *His* Account, who has merited largely for all; and more eſpecially for his immediate Servants, and peculiar People. If ſuch Benefits are, through Him, derived on the whole Race of Mankind; let it not ſeem ſtrange if, in conſideration of His tranſcendent Merit, ſome particular Honours and Diſtinctions be reſerved for his own proper Family.

BUT to return; it appears from what has been ſaid, that your Author's Objection is partly founded on a Miſtake in Fact. The Chriſtian Diſpenſation is in ſome Senſe univerſal; though the Light of the Goſpel has not yet been every where enjoyed. The Benefits of it reach backward to the Creation; and forward to the Conſummation: comprehending at the ſame time, all People, and Nations, and Languages. Our Redeemer, far from being partial, has graſped the whole Globe; and extended the chief of His Bleſſings over all the Ends of the Earth.——— Thus then does your Author partly argue againſt Fact, partly againſt the Reaſon of Things; and wholly without Evidence. His Argument wanders entirely in the Dark; and from unknown Premiſes concludes at a venture.

UPON the whole; whoever is diſpoſed to think ſoberly, will be little moved by ſuch Objections as are here offered. He will perceive it to be the Duty and the Wiſdom of every Rational Creature, to be content with that State in which he is placed, and thankful for the Bleſſings that he enjoys; to make the beſt Uſe he can of what is committed to his Truſt, and leave the reſt to Providence. But to confront Evidence with Conjecture, and Facts with Imaginations; to meaſure the Counſels of Heaven by his ſhort Views, and broken Conceptions; and to conclude that the World muſt needs be ordered, in every Particular, according to his poor Schemes: will appear highly impertinent, arrogant, and profane.——I ſhall only add, in reſpect of your Author, what was formerly ſaid of another Perſon, on another Occaſion; *Monendus eſt——deſinat eſſe rector mundi.*

7. IF * *Chriſtianity, as well as Deiſm, conſiſts in being governed by the Obligations of moral Fitneſs; muſt they not both be the ſame?*——Such Diſcoveries as theſe muſt needs be very edifying; and conduce much both to the Peace of our Minds, and the Proſperity of our Underſtandings. How wonderfully would Religious Knowledge be promoted in this Nation; if the *idle, haranguing Drones* † would but retire, and give way to this *induſtrious Bee:* who after a long

* Page 368. † Page 407.

long Search through the Fields of Truth, returns laden with ſuch precious Spoils as theſe? But what will you ſay, Sir, if inſtead of extracting the Sweets of Flowers, he feed only on poiſonous Weeds; and inſtead of *Honey*, give us *Hemlock?* — *Chriſtianity and Deiſm the ſame?* Why then does he differ with us? and what is it that we are conteſting? That he ſhould miſapprehend *Chriſtianity*, may be no great wonder: but it might well be expected, that he ſhould underſtand *Deiſm*. Yet I venture to affirm, that he has here miſrepreſented both. ——Neither *Chriſtianity*, nor *Deiſm*, *conſiſts in being governed by the Obligations of moral Fitneſs*. To be governed by theſe is *moral Virtue*, properly ſo called; which equally binds the whole Species; conſidered as Men, or *moral Agents*: but cannot be the Characteriſtic, or diſtinguiſhing Principle, of either *Deiſts* or *Chriſtians*. *Deiſm* conſiſts in being governed by the Obligations of *Natural Religion*: and Natural Religion conſiſts in Obedience to the Will of God, as made known by the Light of Nature and Reaſon; as Chriſtianity conſiſts in Obedience to the ſame Will, as made known by the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt. To do Actions becauſe they are *right* in themſelves, is to be governed by *moral Fitneſs*: but *Religion*, whether *natural* or *revealed*, obliges Men to do them, becauſe they are *commanded*. An *Atheiſt* may be governed by *moral Fitneſs*;

neſs; and probably will, when there is no Temptation to hinder him. With what Propriety then can *Deiſm* be ſaid to conſiſt in thoſe Obligations which are incumbent on the very *Atheiſts*, and indeed equally affect all rational Agents? I confeſs indeed, what the Author adds, is a ſufficient Diſtinction from *Atheiſm*; but does by no means come up to the Obligations even of *Deiſm*. The primary Idea of *Religion*, whether natural or revealed, is not an *Imitation* of the Deity, or *a Conformity to his Nature*; but *Obedience* to his Will. Whoever owns a God, muſt acknowledge his Authority; and to *obey* that Authority, is properly being governed by the Obligations of Religion.——If then *Chriſtianity* and *Deiſm* muſt be identify'd by this Author, I preſume he muſt find ſome other Argument for the doing of it. And in the mean time I hope I may conclude, that ſince *neither Chriſtianity, nor Deiſm, conſiſts in being governed by moral Fitneſs*, they may poſſibly be *not the ſame.*

8. * *ARE not God's Commands to be meaſured by the antecedent Fitneſs of things? And can things be ſaid to be fit, or unfit, otherwiſe than as they are for or againſt the common Good.*——Antecedent Fitneſs, tho' a good Rule, as far as it reaches; yet in reſpect of Men, is neither univerſal nor infallible. The Will of God is, in itſelf,

* Page 357.

always measurable by moral *Fitness*; but our Ideas of moral *Fitness* are not always to be depended on; as being sometimes obscure, and very often inadequate. In some Cases, what is really *fit*, appears to us *unfit*; and *vicê versâ*. Where the *Fitness* of things is dark and dubious, and the Divine *Command* clear and certain; can it be any question, whether the former is not to be measured by the latter? Your Author writes, as if all the Relations of things were as plain and familiar to him as the Letters of the Alphabet. I have several Reasons to wish that he would be less sanguine; but at present shall only take notice of that which falls in my way.——Notwithstanding the Magnificence of his Book, the Importance of his Design, the Variety of his Arguments, and the Terror of his Threats; tho' he handle Religion so magisterially, and treat of moral Subjects so dictatorially; tho' he be every where so full of Reasons, Relations, Fitnesses, and the like: I cannot find, after all, that he so much as understands what *Moral Fitness* is; or indeed that he has any Idea of it.—— *Fitness* to promote *natural Good*, whether publick or private; is not *moral*, but *natural Fitness*. *Moral Fitness* is the *Conformity* of *moral Actions to Truth* and *Rectitude*; and can be nothing else, whether it promote *natural Good*, or not. It is doubtless *morally fit* to promote the common Good; but surely it does not follow from hence, that *moral Fitness* entirely consists in so doing.——Even the

old *wandring Philoſophers* never loſt themſelves ſo far (the moſt and the beſt of them at leaſt) as to confound the *Rectum* and the *Utile*. Take *Cicero*'s ſhort Account of the matter: *Optimi quique permulta ob eam unam cauſam faciunt: quia decet, quia rectum, quia honeſtum eſt; etſi nullum conſecuturum emolumentum vident*. But perhaps they meant no more by *Honeſty* and *Rectitude*, than ſacrificing private Intereſt to *common Good*. It is evident to me, that they did mean more than this: But inſtead of Words, let us conſider Actions. I appeal to you, Sir, who are ſo well verſed in Hiſtory, whether the great Men among the Antients were wholly governed by Views of *Utility*, either publick or private. I doubt not but you will allow, that many of the antient *Romans* would utterly have refuſed, either to violate their Oaths, or falſify their Words, tho' in order to ſave their *Capitol*. If it be ſaid, that they might be influenced by Views of Futurity; your Author has precluded himſelf from ſuch a Suppoſition, by repreſenting theſe as *ſervile Motives*, and by conſequence unworthy of ſuch great Minds. However this might be, you will own ſome of them Men of ſuch true Honour, that they could not endure the very Idea of a baſe Action. They loved their *Country* well; but *Truth* and *Virtue* better.

I FIND your Author ſometimes joins the *Glory of God* to the *common Good*. But tho' he ſpeaks of them as of *two* Ends, he conſiders

them but as *one*. Perhaps he will urge, that they are inſeparable. If they may not be ſeparated, they may and ought to be diſtinguiſhed.——*Truth* and *Rectitude* are not only *beneficial*; are not only amiable and beautiful; but they are really *divine*. For *God is Truth*, in a Senſe more than figurative: all eternal Truths being neceſſary Emanations from the Infinite Mind. To act conformably therefore to *Truth*, is to glorify the *God of Truth*. If an *Atheiſt* in any of his Actions is governed by *moral Fitneſs*, or a Regard to *Truth* and *Right*; he ſo far pays Homage, tho' unintended, to that God whom he diſowns. But they who own a God, muſt actually intend this Homage. And let me add, that he is no *true Deiſt*, who, on the Suppoſition of an Interference, would ſacrifice this End to either private or public Advantage.

9. **CAN he who does a thing to avoid being puniſhed, or in hopes of being rewarded hereafter; merit equally with him who is in love with his Duty; and is governed not by ſervile Motives, but by the original Obligation of the moral Fitneſs of Things?*—— How does your Author delight in Extremes! The *common Good*, he makes every thing; and private Good, nothing. *Moral Fitneſs* is, it ſeems, no more than a Tendency to promote the former; and all Regards to the latter are mercenary Views, and *ſervile Motives*, below the

* Pag. 367.

the Dignity of human Nature.——I desire to know, whether an Agent is to aim at the Public Good, exclusively of his own, or inclusively. If exclusively, he aims at a Good less public than he might do; and at the same time unnaturally makes himself a kind of an Outlaw. If inclusively, why not in the Views of another Life, as well as of this? Is it *servile* for a Man to propose his own Happiness, either present or future, in conjunction with that of his Fellow-Creatures? Let it be allowed your Author, that Disinterestedness renders Actions and Agents much more perfect: still his Notion is unsound; and even extravagant. As I formerly observed, it cannot well be considered otherwise, in respect of Mankind, than as a sort of religious *Knight-Errantry*. Whatever may be the Case of superiour Beings; whatever some Men have professed, and others practised; a Conduct entirely disinterested, is above the Principles of human Nature. Many things may be done merely for Virtue's sake; but every thing cannot. The Love of God and Goodness is a powerful and glorious Principle; but in the Mind of such a Creature as Man, it cannot possibly reign alone. And the Reason is, because he is a *sensible*, as well as a *moral Agent*; and as such, must have two distinct Ends, and be obliged to pursue both. In the one Capacity he is obliged to aim at *Virtue*, in the other at *natural Good*.

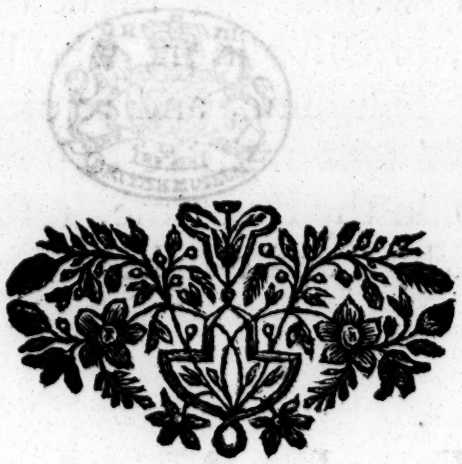
It muſt be agreeable to natural Religion, as well as revealed, for Men to look forward, and keep open their Proſpect into another World. Without a regard to Futurity, their Principles muſt be precarious; and their Integrity depend very much on the Accidents of Life. The more a Man is *in love with his Duty*, and the further he ſees into the Excellence of Virtue; the wiſer, the better, and the happier he is. Let his Obligations to God and Goodneſs influence him at all times as far as poſſible. But in the Day of Adverſity, or even Proſperity; in Times of Tryal and Temptation; the Motives of Religion are abſolutely neceſſary. Either the Beauty of Virtue will fade in his eyes, or he will be in no condition to mind it. Strong Fear, or violent Pain, or exceſſive Grief, or immoderate Joy, or profuſe Pleaſure, would naturally diſſipate his Thoughts, and draw off his Attention; if thoſe powerful Motives were not at hand, to counterbalance his Affections, and keep him ſteddy.——Beſides, are not thoſe future Rewards which Revelation ſets before us, ſummed us, as it were, in the eternal Enjoyment of Virtue? At leaſt this will be the principal Ingredient. And from hence it follows, that the more any Man is in love with Virtue, the more deſirous he muſt be of thoſe Rewards.

I Have now, Sir, gone through your Queries, and endeavoured to give you what Satisfaction

tisfaction I could. To your Conſideration I leave it, whether your Author's Arguments be ſo clear and cogent as you ſeem to think them. You tell me he has many Followers. It may be ſo. Whoever preſents Men with a new Scheme, and propoſes to gratify them both with Liberty and Novelty, ſeldom fails to draw a Croud about him. They look, and liſten for a while, and are pleaſed with the Project: But when they have been amuſed with it for ſome time, and have found it more ſpecious than wiſe, more plauſible than ſafe; they naturally return to their old Meaſures, and a ſober Way of Thinking. I am,

SIR,

Your moſt Humble Servant, &c.



POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

I HAD almoſt overlooked the Queſtion in your POSTSCRIPT. You ask me, *What I ſhould think of that Man's Diſcretion, who walking in the Night-time with a good Light in his Hand, ſhould either carry it behind him, or put it out, that he might have the Benefit of the Stars, ſome of them clear, and moſt of them clouded?*——Inſtead of giving a direct Anſwer to this Queſtion, I ſhall take the liberty to ask you another, which, if I miſtake not, comes much nearer to the Caſe in view. ——What would you think of that Man's Diſcretion, or Diſpoſition, who becauſe others are fond of Sun-ſhine, and rejoice in the Uſe of it, ſhould take a diſlike to it; and muffling himſelf up in the Day-time, reſolve to do all his Buſineſs by Candle-light?

FINIS.